



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, James L. Streeter, and Elissa T. Wright.

Thursday, January 12, 2006

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

SPECIAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Kolnaski and Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.
Members Absent: Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Scott, Councilor Sheets, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan, and the following individuals:

*Staff: Director of Public Works Gary Schneider, Assistant Director of Public Works Carl Almquist
Groton WPCA: Dave Williams, Joel Douglas, William Greenhalgh*

Stonington Board of Selectmen: William Brown, Pete Balestracci, Stephen Bessette

Stonington WPCA: Harold Storrs, Jim Petrosky, James Sisk, Lynn Young

There was no quorum of the Committee of the Whole. The meeting was for informational purposes only, and no action was taken.

3. NEW BUSINESS

2005-0231

Regional Sewer System Issues

Discussed

Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted that Stonington has been trying to find a solution to its sewer system issues for some time. First Selectman Bill Brown asked Groton to join with Stonington in a regional approach to sewer issues. James Sisk, Chairman of Stonington's WPCA, presented a chronology of events. He explained that a Comprehensive 20-Year Facilities Plan was initiated in 2000. In December 2002, DEP suggested that some synergy could be had between Groton and Stonington given the facilities plans of the two towns. Mr. Sisk suggested there would be benefits to diverting some of Stonington's flow to Groton. Stonington obtained a grant from DEP that partially funded a feasibility study that was completed in January 2004. Other alternatives were examined, but the Route 1 alternative was recommended by Fuss & O'Neill. Camp Dresser McKee was then commissioned to review the route which the Stonington WPCA still feels is feasible.

Councilor O'Beirne asked what the benefits are for Groton. He noted that the Town has been trying to upgrade Groton's Water Pollution Control Facility for the last ten years but the state has delayed the process. Councilor O'Beirne outlined the following questions that he would have regarding the proposal:

- What is Groton's additional capacity on a daily basis and during a significant storm?*
- What are the risks of exceeding capacity or potential shutdowns?*
- What are the extra costs to Groton for operations?*
- What are the benefits for Groton?*

Mr. Sisk suggested that Stonington could bring upgrades to the system that Groton cannot afford. The connection would also provide 2500 additional customers that would generate over \$1.1 million per year in revenues. Lynn Young suggested that further benefits include help with the northeast interceptor, economy of scale, help with future upgrades, or additional equity in the form of a buy-in from Stonington. Ms. Young noted there are five alternatives that range from \$15 to \$50 million. The Groton proposal falls in the middle of the range, but it is better environmentally and economically.

Councilor Bond arrived at 7:36 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski and Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.
Members Absent: Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Scott, Councilor Sheets, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright

Discussed

Ms. Young continued and noted that any partnership between Stonington and Groton will not derail the process that is already in place for Groton's upgrade. Fuss & O'Neill has examined the data and the additional flow does not appear to be problem. Harold Storrs, Director of Stonington's WPCA, stated the numbers indicate that Stonington would have to abide by a cap for diverting flow to Groton. Stonington could assist in some of the costs associated with maintenance and upgrade as articulated in the Groton analysis. It was noted that neither Groton's WPCA nor the Town Council have seen the report.

Assistant Director of Public Works Carl Almquist noted that the capacity at Groton's WPCF has not been examined in detail, which would include identifying the flow reserved for future expansion in Groton.

Dave Williams, Chairman of Groton's WPCA, further explained that consideration must be given to current flows, reserve flow for the Navy, and reserves for people who live in sewer areas, but are not hooked up. The "reserve" is not as large as it appeared to be 10 years ago when the facility upgrades were first planned, and in fact it is about equal to what Stonington is proposing to divert. That would mean that Groton would have no reserve for future development, and that would mean upgrading the plant again.

Mr. Almquist went on to explain that the outfall is the limiting factor for Groton's facility (10-12 million gallons per day). The only way to address that issue is flow equalizing which requires additional storage tanks. Mr. Sisk suggested that Stonington's Mystic plant was envisioned in the consultant's study as the "holding tank". Mr. Almquist noted that a smaller outfall pipe was installed in Groton at DEP's insistence to limit development.

Ms. Young stated the Groton analysis appears to have looked at Groton's current flow, but not Groton's reserve. William Greenhalgh of Groton's WPCA added that Stonington's needs will also increase, but Mr. Storrs explained that the numbers used in the study are 20-year projections for Stonington. Stephen Bessett of Stonington noted that the peak season capacity issues in Stonington are also a concern.

Mr. Almquist stated that Groton was never set up to be a regional facility and is limited by the outfall. He further added that, given the lawsuits and issues involved in the original construction of the outfall, it is not likely that the pipe will ever be upgraded or that another pipe could be constructed.

Mr. Sisk reiterated his understanding that without a major upgrade to Groton's facility and improvements to the outfall, Stonington should not consider Groton as an option. Mr. Williams stated that at a minimum, Groton's facility would be need to be upgraded and equalization of flow addressed.

Councilor O'Beirne stated he needs to see a technical analysis of limitations. Mr. Brown suggested that Groton come up with those numbers to see if it's worth talking about in the future. Mr. Sisk offered to provide Stonington's information to Groton. Joel Douglas of Groton's WPCA expressed concerned with Groton taking on the expense of further engineering work. The numbers indicate that Groton has about 1,000,000 gallons in reserve and the question is whether or not the Town wants to give that reserve to Stonington. Mayor Watson asked staff and Groton's WPCA to look at the numbers and come back to the Council with a recommendation.

Discussion followed on the need to consider Groton's reserve, the limitations of the outfall, and expansion of Groton's facility. Mr. Brown asked that the Town Council get back to Stonington and he thanked the Town Manager and Town Council for the meeting.

4. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

None.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.